

MEALTIME HELPER

MAKING MEALTIME EASY

Chili Con Carne - Recipe

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 1 hour 15 minutes (simmer) — up to 2 hours for deeper flavor

Total time: 1 hour 30 minutes — 2 hours 15 minutes

Servings: 6–8

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil or olive oil
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 1–2 bell peppers (red or green), diced
- 3–4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1–1¼ pounds (450–560 g) ground beef (80/20) or a mix of beef and pork
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1–2 tablespoons chili powder (adjust to taste)
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika (or regular paprika)
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼–½ teaspoon cayenne or crushed red pepper (optional, for heat)
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt (adjust to taste)
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 (14 oz / 400 g) can diced tomatoes (or crushed)
- 1 (14 oz / 400 g) can tomato sauce or passata
- 1 cup (240 ml) beef stock or water (add more as needed)
- 1 (15 oz / 425 g) can kidney beans, drained and rinsed (optional — traditionalists sometimes omit beans)
- 1 (15 oz / 425 g) can black beans or pinto beans, drained and rinsed (optional)
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar or 1 teaspoon honey (optional, balances acidity)
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce (optional, adds depth)
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar or lime juice (to finish)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro or parsley, for garnish (optional)
- Optional toppings: shredded cheddar, sour cream, sliced green onions, jalapeños, tortilla chips, lime wedges

Directions

1. **Heat the pot:** In a large heavy pot or Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium-high heat.
2. **Sweat aromatics:** Add the chopped onion and diced bell pepper. Cook 4–6 minutes until softened. Stir in the minced garlic and cook 30–60 seconds until fragrant.
3. **Brown the meat:** Push the vegetables to the side, add the ground meat, and break it up with a spoon. Cook until browned and no longer pink, about 6–8 minutes. Drain excess fat if there's a lot, leaving a tablespoon for flavor.
4. **Build flavor:** Stir in the tomato paste and cook 1–2 minutes to caramelize slightly. Add chili powder, smoked paprika, cumin, oregano, cayenne (if using), salt, and pepper. Cook 1 minute, stirring, to toast the spices.
5. **Add tomatoes and stock:** Pour in the diced tomatoes, tomato sauce, and beef stock. Stir to combine, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot. Add Worcestershire and brown sugar if using. Bring to a gentle simmer.
6. **Simmer low and slow:** Reduce heat to low, partially cover, and simmer for at least 45 minutes to 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Add more stock or water if the chili gets too thick. For deeper flavor, simmer up to 2 hours.
7. **Add beans (optional):** About 10–15 minutes before serving, stir in the drained beans and simmer until heated through. Taste and adjust seasoning—add more salt, a pinch of sugar, or a splash of vinegar/lime juice to brighten the sauce.
8. **Finish:** Remove from heat and stir in the vinegar or lime juice. Let rest 5 minutes to meld flavors.
9. **Serve:** Spoon chili into bowls and garnish with chopped cilantro/parsley and any desired toppings: shredded cheese, sour cream, sliced green onions, jalapeños, or tortilla chips.
10. **Store:** Leftovers keep 3–4 days in the fridge and often taste better the next day. Freeze portions up to 3 months.

Tips

- For a richer chili, use a mixture of ground beef and pork, or add a few strips of diced bacon at the start.
- For a thicker chili, mash a portion of the beans against the side of the pot or simmer uncovered until reduced.
- If you prefer no beans (Texas style), simply omit them and increase the meat slightly.
- Adjust heat with chipotle in adobo for smoky spice, or mild chili powder for subtle warmth.

Comforting, adaptable, and excellent for feeding a crowd — this Chili Con Carne is a reliable weeknight champion or game-day staple.